



## **News Release**

For Immediate Release:  
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### **Utah's Influenza Season May Coincide with Olympics**

(Salt Lake City, UT) –The 2002 Winter Olympic Games are coming to Salt Lake City along with the increased possibility for exposure to influenza due to large crowd settings. As of January 17, 2002, 73 cases of influenza have been confirmed in Utah. With 25 occurring within the past week, flu season appears to be picking up steam. Eighty-six percent of the cases are in children under age 5; this high percentage is due to children's hospitals and clinics aggressive testing policy. All flu cases are Type A and have been reported in Salt Lake Davis, Summit, Tooele, Weber and Utah counties.

Utah's flu season typically runs from November through March, with peak levels often occurring in December and January; however, last year the peak was during the second week in February. As cases may still be occurring during the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympic Games, the UDOH continues to recommend that Olympic visitors, athletes, volunteers and workers are vaccinated against the virus.

During a normal influenza season the optimal time to vaccinate is usually during October and November. However, influenza vaccine is available throughout the influenza season. Vaccination in January is effective in most flu seasons. The vaccine is not fully protective until about two weeks after vaccination. The best means of preventing influenza is by vaccination. Because the viruses that cause influenza change often, an influenza vaccination should be received every year.

During the 2000-2001 flu season there were 130 laboratory-confirmed flu cases reported in Utah. But since most patients with flu don't get tested, this number is only an indicator representing the thousands of Utahns who likely contracted the flu last year.

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Influenza is a very contagious viral infection of the respiratory system. Symptoms of influenza include fever, muscle aches, headache, congestion, runny nose, cough, sore throat, and general weakness. These symptoms usually appear one to three days after a person has been exposed to the virus. The influenza virus is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes and sprays droplets that can be inhaled by others.

Hand washing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. There is more to hand washing than you think! By rubbing your hands vigorously with soapy water, you pull the dirt plus the oily soils free from your skin. The soap lather suspends both the dirt and germs trapped inside and are then quickly washed away.

For more information about influenza vaccinations and locations where the vaccines are available, call the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659.

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